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FOR THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE RUSSIAN VERSION AND OF THE GREEK
MANUSCRIPTS

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By HENRI GRÉGOIRE

Miss Alison Frantz's discovery, published in this issue of *Byzantion*, has afforded the long-wanted archeological proof of the existence, as early as the twelfth century, not only of the Byzantine Epic—the earliest known manuscript of which belongs to the fourteenth century, —but of some at least of the folk-songs which have long been recognized as the principal source of the Epic. This new and conclusive evidence makes it still more plausible that the most ancient and original forms of the Epic are those where the connections with the ballads are the closest. We shall, more confidently than before, use that criterion to classify the extant manuscripts of the Greek text, and to determine their relation to the Russian fragments of the Epic.¹

To begin with the Russian text, the time has come to decide the question whether it represents only a late and corrupt state of the original text, or whether it is nearer the common archetype than the Greek manuscripts.

The main differences between the Russian version and *all* our Greek texts are these: in the Russian, the hero slays the Dragon and fights Philopappos and Maximo the Amazon, not *after* his marriage with the daughter of the Strategos, whom he has so brilliantly succeeded in stealing from her parents, but *before* the abduction; and second, his meeting with the Emperor (called Basileios) ends in a fierce battle against the imperial troops, and a crushing victory which leaves Digenis master of the "Emperor's City."

As to the first difference, it could be supposed that the arrangement of events in the Greek version is *better* than the composition shown by the Russian, for in the Greek, the theme of the successive fights against various adversaries is undoubtedly rendered more interesting by the avowed aim of all those aggressors, which is always to separate Digenis from his beautiful wife. The motif is taken from

¹ See M. Speranski, *Sbornik Otd. Russk. Jaz. i Slov.*, Imp. Acad. of Sciences, vol. XCIX, no. 7 (Petrograd, 1922).

the Hellenistic and Byzantine novel, where two lovers generally emerge triumphant from a long succession of dangers and trials. But it is by no means certain that the oldest Digenis was a perfect "novel" of the classical type. And as to Philopappos, in the numerous ballads in which he figures, he never appears among those who try to abduct Digenis' wife. On the contrary, he speaks and acts as a slave, prisoner, or servant of Digenis, as a clever man to whose advice the hero resorts in order, precisely, to win the hand of his future wife. Philopappos is sent as "ambassador" to the parents of the bride. But he fails in his mission, and it is only then that Digenis decides to do the job himself. But he too would have failed, if Philopappos had not given him precious advice concerning the road he must follow, and, above all, about a certain magic lute he has to make out of the bark of a certain tree and from the skin and teeth of certain snakes. As a matter of fact, in most songs dealing with the abduction of the bride, Philopappos plays the decisive role and cannot possibly be dispensed with. His advice and the making of the lute always precede the abduction itself.

Therefore, when we find in the Russian text exactly the same sequence of events: first, the episode of Philopappos, and the abduction immediately afterwards, we feel that this is true to the genuine tradition, particularly since, in the Russian, Philopappos, after his defeat by Digenis, becomes his slave and tries to win back his liberty by counselling his master, and revealing to him the name and "address" of the beautiful bride.

I may quote P. Pascal's translation of the Russian: "A ce même moment, le vieux Philippape (vanquished by Digenis), se tournant vers Devgeni, dit: 'Autour aux ailes d'or, tres fameux Devgeni, tu es fameux et fort entre nous tous. . . . Mais plus brave et plus fort que toi est le fameux stratège. Et il a une fille qui a, elle aussi, l'audace et la bravoure d'un homme, et pour la beauté il n'y a pas plus beau sur terre. . . .'" From the numerous ballads, I shall quote only these lines, containing the instructions, or directions, of old Philopappos to Digenis:

Καὶ πολογᾶται Φιλοπαπποῦς, τοῦ Διενῆ καὶ λέγει·
 "Πόμεινε τώρα, Διγενή, γιὰ νὰ σοῦ παραγγείλω.
 *Ἀν πιάσης τὴν παραγγελιά, τὴν νύνημφη νὰ κλέψῃς.
 Καὶ πιάσε τοῦτον τὸ στρατίν, τοῦτον τὸ μονοπάτιν.
 Τὸ μονοπάτι βγάλλει σε σὲ δασερὸ λιβάδι κτλ.

The conjecture that, in the oldest form of the Epic, the Philopappos episode originally stood before the abduction is borne out even by the majority of the Greek manuscripts. For, in the archaic *Escorialensis* as well as in manuscripts of Andros, Trebizond, and Oxford, after his first and childish exploits (slaying of lions, bears and deer), young Digenis leaves the road along which he was riding with his uncle on his way home, and penetrates into the wilderness, seeking the famous brigands or Apelates, whom he finally reaches thanks to their water-boy. He has a long and interesting interview with old Philopappos, whom he tells about his desire to become an apprentice in the warlike school of those outlaws. But he soon quarrels with the Apelates, whom he beats, stealing from them their clubs which he brings to Philopappos. The disgruntled old man is about to react in a violent manner, but Digenis menaces him, and even slaps him, according to one version.

This is the ordinary way in which Digenis's battles begin. But this particular one is abruptly interrupted. The Canto, or in the case of the *Escorialensis*, the story, ends without conclusion, and we hear no more of Philopappos and his men until the beginning of the long episode which is to be found in the seventh Canto of *Trebizond*, or the sixth of *Grottaferrata*. One remembers that there, when Philopappos discovers Digenis and starts talking with him, he distinctly states that he has never seen him before. Nor does Digenis himself recognize his adversary, with whom he ought to be well acquainted. The conclusion is naturally that the first and second Philopappos episode cannot have been invented by the same writer, and that the original Digenis is a Digenis where only one of those doublets stood. If we had to choose between the two, we might prefer the second and longer. But as we are going to see, its interest and relatively good style does not prove that it is original; at any rate, we shall demonstrate that it does not now stand in its proper place.

To decide the question of the priority or originality of either of those Philopappos episodes, we must use other criteria than the criterion of literary finish. An episode which evidently is mutilated, the link of which with the following cantos no longer appears, could be, it is true, interpolated. But such an interpolation would be extremely awkward, as it clearly involves an inconsistency. It is, even at first glance, much more probable that the first Philopappos episode belonged to the older story, and has been retained in part, but also in part cancelled and suppressed. It was retained because it was archaic

and familiar, but it was curtailed, because the second part of it was too openly in contradiction with the order of events which the redactor had resolved to adopt, putting the fights against Philopappos and the Apelates between the abduction and Digenis's buildings. Really, there can be no doubt about the natural sequel of the first Philopappos episode. After Digenis's insolent challenge, Philopappos has but one thing to do. He must fight, and if that fight is not recounted then, it is because the redactor was justly afraid of committing the crime of repetition; for he had in store already the other version of the same incident.

In the original from which the first episode is derived, the sequence of events was as follows:

1. A peaceful interview with Philopappos and his men;
2. The defeat of the latter;
3. The defeat of the chief;
4. The suggestion made by Philopappos to Digenis to ravish the famous and beautiful daughter of the Strategos;
5. The elopement itself.

Now, the Russian offers us almost exactly the state of the text which we should have inferred from the extant Greek recensions.

This being so, a strong presumption of antiquity and reliability is created in favor of the Russian. And that impression is reinforced by two facts: (1) the Russian and especially the Tikhonravov fragments are by no means a paraphrase, but a very faithful translation of the Greek, so that it seems excluded that any addition in the Russian (compared with extant Greek texts) should be laid to the translator; and (2) there are striking parallels to some of the alleged "additions" of the Russian in genuine Greek ballads.

If, then, the Russian, where it differs from the Greek recensions of the Epic, is evidence of a more ancient form of the double novel, the double story of the Emir and Digenis, it becomes necessary to take seriously its main variant, which is the warlike conclusion of the meeting between Digenis and Emperor Basil. Here too we have indications that this version is original. Epic heroes are often represented as fighting and vanquishing their emperor. In some place, the epic itself still bears traces of the anti-imperial conclusion of the episode in its older form.

And (3) I cannot stress too much the fact that many traits even in our manuscripts disclose the intimate connection of Digenis with the Paulicians, the enemies of Emperor Basil. It is well-known that

he is said to be the grandson of Chrysochir, the grandnephew of Karbeas. But it has not been remarked that his two adversaries in the great battle following upon the elopement are the strategos Dukas and Soudalis. There are many Dukases in Byzantine history, but only one Soudalis, and the extermination of the Paulicians in 855 was the work of Andronikos Dukas and Soudalis. This will, I trust, prove conclusive. The Digenis poem must originally have been Paulician. And therefore, a form of the poem where Digenis fights Basil, chief enemy of the Paulicians, must be original or near the original. This constitutes a brilliant vindication of the value of the Russian text.

Now, the implications of that discovery are important for the classification of the manuscript. For, if the "Russian" is right, and *he* is surely right, then all our Greek texts go back to a "remaniement loyaliste," where the interview between Basil and Digenis has been transformed into a very courteous and diplomatic meeting, and where, at the same time, the whole series of Dragon-Philopappos-Maximo episodes has been transferred from its former place to another, enlarged, and rewritten. Only the beginning of the old Philopappos episode was kept in some manuscripts.

That the Dragon and Philopappos-Maximo episodes have suffered some alterations is proved by two facts. First they do not appear where they should, where they are announced, for instance, in *Grotta-Ferrata* IV, 965:

Πολλοὶ δὲ τῶν ἀπελατῶν τοῦτο ἀναμαθόντες
 συμβούλιον ἐποίησαν τὴν κόρην ἀφαρπάσαι·
 καὶ πάντας συναπέκτεινε καθινοτάσσω τούτους.

And second, they are recounted in the "first person," are forming part of the "Tales told by Digenis;" but this presentation is extremely awkward, and it is easy to prove that these stories were not originally written in that form.² Even the *Escorialensis* may have preserved traces of the "third person" (vv. 1090-1099, cf. 1102, 1114).

Again, the reason why this awkwardness crept in is clear. The redactor followed at first a manuscript akin to the Russian, where Philopappos and the rest were inserted between Childhood and

² Digenis reports in the *first* person the plots and consultations of his enemies without any indication that he was present.

Abduction. Immediately after the Abduction came the Imperial Episode. The writer knew another arrangement, according to which Philopappos-Maximo came after the Abduction, but having already referred to Philopappos he hesitated to introduce him again. The motif, however, of the Lovers' perils and separations was very tempting, and he made a *moderate* and symbolic use of it (see the lines just quoted).

When all that was done, and when the story was concluded by the crowning imperial episode, the redactor wished, by a kind of afterthought, to utilize the long redaction of Dragon-Philopappos-Maximo. But these events too, evidently, had preceded, not followed, the final triumph of Digenis. Hence the transformation into a narrative in the first person.

This *very simple* explanation of a certain number of quaint peculiarities of our Greek Digenis text will help us classify the manuscripts. *All of them* have those tales in the first person, and consequently they all go back to a revised and conflated copy.

But let us not forget our main criterion. The manuscripts likely to have preserved the traces of an earlier redaction must retain our attention. These are *Escorialensis* and *A T O* (where Philopappos twice appears). They are interesting because it is clear that their redactor had two entirely different versions before them, and tried to harmonize them.

Thus, in the story of the manuscript tradition, we must not only operate with the ordinary conception of *filiation*, or else we must amend it, improve it. There are cases of *crossings* between the representatives of two families.

We must postulate a Greek archetype of the Russian, *R*^g, which was conspicuous for two things, the place of the Philopappos episode, and the "disloyal" episode of Basil. We must postulate also a loyalist version of the story, to which all extant Greek texts go back: in some of them Basil, in some others, Romanos and Nikephoros were the Emperors. But this detail does not matter much. The important fact is that in a group of manuscripts (*A T O*), we have still a trace of the old role and the place of the Philopappos episode (as in the Russian) combined with a quite different treatment of that story.

That group of manuscripts, thus, is likely to have preserved other archaic peculiarities. And we have already seen, and we shall see again, that this is the case. But on the other hand, *A T O* are conspicuous for certain blunders and corruptions. It will be shown that

these errors found their way into *A T* because they were already extant, at least in germ, in the archetype of the Escorialensis.

The Escorialensis begins abruptly with the following lines (1 ff.).

Κρότοι καὶ κτύποι καὶ ἀπειλαὶ μὴ σὲ καταπτοήσουν
μὴ φοβηθῇς τὸν θάνατον, παρὰ μητρὸς κατάραν.

It is clear to us, because we have the *Cryptoferratensis*, that these lines are spoken by the elder brother, and that the missing prologue contained the following events: the mother entreats the brothers to pursue the abductor and to bring back their ravished sister; the brothers reach the camp of the Emir, who then proposes a single combat; the champion chosen by the lot is young Constantine; his brothers remind him of his duty and of "the Mother's curse": "κρότοι καὶ κτύποι . . . μὴ σὲ καταπτοήσουν."

But if we now take *A T* where the verses are also extant,³ we shall find that they are put in the mouth, not of the brothers, but of the mother. The result is that nothing is left in *A* of the story which we have just recounted. The single combat follows without challenge, without warning, without the slightest justification. Evidently the redactor had before him a copy beginning, just as our Escorialensis, with the lines κρότοι κτλ. He did not understand them, and failed to discover the true story. Instead, he forged the lamentable astrological prologue. Thus, one of the main features of *A T*, the *rifacimento* of the prologue, is due to a material deterioration of the archetype, and *E* reproduced that already mutilated archetype, but without any attempt to compensate the loss or to replace it by anything else.

Another very bad feature of *A T* is the corruption or interpolation of their genealogies. We know, not only from *C*, but also from the fourth Canto of *A T* themselves, that:

1. The "brothers" claim to be the sons of a (nameless) nobleman of the theme of Anatolikon, belonging to the family of Kinnamos, and that only their mother belongs to the Dukas family.

2. The Emir claims to be descended from Ambron, Emir of Melitene, and from the Paulicians Chrysochir and Karbeas.

In *A T*, the name of the father of the "brethren" is Aaron, and the name of the Dukas family seems to be transferred from the female to the male line. That modification might have a definite political reason; but, as it is to be found in I and not in IV (where the primitive genealogy is kept), one is tempted to ascribe it to some *mixup* arising from a mere "clerical error."

* In A, I, 324 ff.

Now it is remarkable to trace in *E* exactly that error. The name *Aaron* for the father of the Christians is nothing but a gross blunder. The verses 145 ff., ὁ πατήρ μας ἦτον Ἀαρὼν καὶ θεῖός μας ὁ Καροῖλλης / ὁ Μουσιλὼν ὁ Σακουσσιὸς πατήρ ἦτον τοῦ πατρός μου, clearly contain the genealogy of the Emir. It is so true that in the speech of the Emir, all these names have been left out, to avoid a repetition probably. The archetype of *Escorialensis* had them twice, and *A T* following the archetype has Aaron twice, first as *Aaron*, second as *Ambron*. Ἀαρών thus is only a corruption of Ἀμβρων.

An important consequence of that blunder is that Μῦσελῶμ, commonly taken for a Christian, is really a Moslem, probably the famous Maslamah, given in the *Dat-ul-Himmah* as an ancestor, or at least a forerunner, of the Champions of the faith of Malatiya in the ninth century.

A third observation of the same kind; the wrong name of Mousour or Mousouros, so common in *A T*, is also the result of a clerical error which we can lay our hands on in the *Escorialensis* version. Verse 261 in *Escorialensis* reads:

Καὶ ὁ ἀδελφός μου καὶ ὁ θεῖός μου ὁμουρτασίτης⁴

Μουσου(ρ) is the result of the confusion of the two pronouns, and the ρ comes from Ταρσίτης.

The conclusion is that a manuscript where different confusions had already crept in, and which had lost the beginning of the story, is the common archetype of *E* and *A T*, and this accounts sufficiently for the striking similarities which exist between them, similarities which have long been remarked—for instance, the archaic retention of the first Philopappos episode.

The great differences in the form are to be explained in a very simple way. Many things of the greatest value have been presented in a fuller form by *Escorialensis* and omitted by *A T*; but, on the other hand, there are things in *A T* which have been omitted by *Escorialensis*. As to the language, *Escorialensis* vulgarizes almost everywhere and spoils the meter very often by doing so; but *A T* tries to use a higher style than the archetype and spoils the poetical value of many passages preserved in *Escorialensis*. But, if *A T* and *O* are clearly derived from the archetype of *E*, this applies only to the first part of the work. The last Episode, the Death of Digenis, to begin with the building of his Castle near the Euphrates, appears in the

⁴ Read ὁ θεῖός σου: this was corrected in the archetype, where σου was written above μου.

Escorialensis in a form which is entirely discrepant from every other Greek version (we do not possess, unfortunately, any Russian fragment for that epilogue).

The main differences are these. The detailed *ἐκφρασις* of the buildings is entirely missing. There is only a description of the Park, with its trees, waters, and birds, and just a few lines about the palace itself. The bridge of Akritas comes in—it is not even mentioned in any other version. The tomb is described as being near the bridge. One could be tempted to suppose that the *Escorialensis* has abridged a more elaborate description, but, fortunately, we can prove that this is not the case. The criterion of the folk-songs again enables us to solve the problem. For we possess a ballad or, rather, a number of ballads where a similar description is an introduction to the last scene, the death of Digenis. In these ballads, Digenis's death is foretold by the birds who, while they were wont to sing all the time πάντα θὰ ζῇ Ἀκρίτας, suddenly change their tune and sing αὐριο πεθάνει Ἀκρίτης, "Tomorrow, Digenis will die." In other words, the birds, in the original folk-song, are not a purely decorative motif. They offer the immediate transition to the Death.

Now the system followed by the redactors of the Epic is clear. They try to eliminate all fabulous and supernatural feats, while trying to keep the traditional motifs. They could not respect the prophetic birds. But, finding *speaking birds* in their models, they transformed those legendary birds into well-taught parrots, like those which were found at the Byzantine court.

This apparently trifling remark is of great moment. It enables us to pronounce the verdict that on this point *Escorialensis* is original. The story of the death must come immediately after the birds; and, in those redactions where the Parrots are separated from the Death by a long series of verses, those verses must be ascribed to an interpolation. This is a clear proof of the fact that the description of the buildings, as one reads it in *A T* and *C*, is a learned Byzantine embellishment, and that *Escorialensis*, on the contrary, is quite near to the source, the popular ballad (with of course the suppression of the *θαρρασιά*).

There is another point of difference between *Escorialensis* and the other Greek versions. In the *Escorialensis*, Digenis, on his death-bed, addresses his "pallicars," not his wife, in a speech where he enumerates some of his exploits. The whole passage is missing in *A T O* and *C*, but again it is full of verses, either extant in folksongs, or redolent of the style of popular ballads. In *C*, like in *A T O*, the whole scene has been rewritten, to make it consistent with the data of the novel,

where the pallicars play almost no role. And only prowesses accomplished in the novel are recorded. Moreover, *Escorialensis* is the only manuscript which mentions the Angel of Death, referred to in some extant ballads.

One sees that, while *A T O* go back clearly—for the first part of the story—to the very archetype of *Escorialensis*, for the last episode *A T O* drew on another source, which must be identical with the archetype of *C* (Grottaferrata).

The explanation may be that the redactor preferred, to an archaic poem, the "byzantinized" form of the story, more learned, less popular, less fantastic, which he found in a manuscript of the other group. But perhaps he had no choice. The manuscript he followed possibly had lost its concluding pages. As a matter of fact, several of the extant manuscripts have suffered deteriorations of that sort; *Trebizond* begins abruptly at verse I, 231 of the *C* version; *Escorialensis* at verse I, 134, and we have seen that the bad "astrological" prologue of *A T* was forged to make up for that loss. *Escorialensis* seems to have lost also the description of the burial of two heroes. It is quite possible, and even very plausible, that the archetype of *A T O* resorted to a copy of the type of *C*, simply because his first model left him in the lurch.

In any case, we have a second instance of the *crossing* of two manuscripts belonging to two different groups.

We have seen that his contamination had taken place already once: a manuscript containing the Philopappos episode in the "prenuptial" place was artificially conflated with another where the story was differently arranged.

And now we see how a manuscript resulting from that crossing and still containing a lot of "good things" was "conflated" with a manuscript of another type, where the end of Digenis in the midst of a Byzantine palace, surrounded by army surgeons, and so on, was recounted in an edifying and formal tone quite foreign to the folksongs.

A T are the offsprings of that new *mésalliance*. But that is not all. They are defaced not only by their "astrological" prologue—known to *O* and to Kaisarios Dapontes—but also by a late and awkward "remaniement," due to a certain Eustathios and addressed to a certain Manuel. *T* is not worse than *A*, but it has very serious gaps in which many important things perished altogether. It was unfortunate, therefore, that the late manuscript was the first to be published and the only one to be translated. Most of the errors committed by Sathas

and Legrand and still current in papers on Digenis Akritas go back to the "remaniement" of that late Eustathios,—later even than the archetype of *O*. Most of the proper names said to be in the epic are either distorted, like Mousour or Mousouros, or inventions of Eustathios (like Eudokia, Anna, Irene, and the like).

As to the *Cryptoferratensis*, which seems to have preserved many important features of the original, and is particularly reliable so far as the proper names are concerned. It has, and it is the only one which has, the very curious allusion to a Moslem worship of Neeman's *Mandilin*, a Moslem counterpart of the famous image of our Lord, the great relic of Edessa. It is also the *Cryptoferratensis* whose description of Digenis's tomb enabled us, ten years ago, to locate the whole story.⁵ But, in the whole conclusion of the romance, it is undoubtedly less original than the *Escorialensis*. It goes back to a lost manuscript where the elaborate description of the buildings was inserted, the very text on which the archetype of *A T* also draws.

In this new attempt to settle the difficult question of the relationship existing between the extant manuscripts and the many copies which are now lost, and to which Kaisarios Dapontes bears witness, I have limited myself to the new results of my own research. I have thought it unnecessary to give a full bibliography of the question, which will be found in numerous articles published in *Byzantion*, especially since 1931. I have also avoided discussion and polemics. One may compare the stemma illustrating my theory, which is appended to this paper, with the tentative stemma of Professor Kyriakidis in the tenth volume of the periodical *Λαογραφία*.⁶ Both stemmata, in spite of their differences, completely dispose of the quaint idea of Professor Chatzes, according to which a certain Manuel is the author of the original romance. That Manuel is simply a scribe, who is responsible only for a very late and bad copy, the lost archetype of *A T*.

I have not taken into account the so-called second manuscript of Andros, a copy in prose, closely related to *A* proper, or to its archetype, and which is negligible. I trust that this our study will serve as a foundation for a critical edition of the Byzantine Epic. The main criterion, I must stress again, is afforded by the folk-songs, the existence of which at an early period has been so well established by Miss Alison Frantz.

⁵ *Byzantion*, VI (1931), pp. 481-509.

⁶ St. Kyriakides, *Λαογραφία*, I¹ (X), 1932, p. 661.

